

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 24.-Of Marriage, and Divorce.

IV. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of Consanguinity or Affinity forbidden in the Word¹; Nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any Law of man or consent of Parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife². The man may not marry any of his wives kindred, nearer in blood, then he may of his own; nor, the woman, of her husbands kindred, nearer in blood, then of her own³.

Question 1.—*Ought marriage to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the Word?*

Answer.—No. Leviticus 18. The light of nature, as revealed in the sentiments of nearly all mankind, teaches that there are degrees of relationship, between which marriage would be unnatural and monstrous. Thus, most commonwealths make incest penal. The only place in the Scriptures where these degrees are laid down, is Leviticus 18. Concerning this place two important questions arise. 1. Is this law still binding? 2. How is it to be expounded? We hold that this law, although found in the Hebrew code, has not passed away, because it is neither ceremonial nor typical, and because it is founded in traits of man and society common to all races and ages. We argue also, presumptively, that if this law is a dead one, then the Scriptures contain nowhere a distinct legislation against this great crime of incest. But we have more positive proof. 1.) In the law itself it is extended to foreigners dwelling in Israel, Lev. 18:26, and to all pagan nations, equally with the Hebrew, verses 24 to 27. 2.) The law itself insinuates its moral character as a procuring cause of God's judgments against the heathen nations dispossessed by the Hebrews, Lev. 18:27,28. 3.) It is a great procuring of God's judgment upon the people of God, Amos 2:7. 4.) In the New Testament, we find the same law enforced by the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 5:1. For this incestuous member evidently took his stepmother as his wife. Unless this Levitical law is the one on which this man is condemned, there is no other.

Question 2.—*Can incestuous marriages ever be made lawful, by any man, or consent of parties, so as these persons may live together as man and wife?*

Answer.—No. Mark 6:18. Therefore the Popish church does err, speaking in the decrees of the council of Trent, after this manner: If any man affirms, that these degrees only in consanguinity or affinity, which are set down in Leviticus, may hinder a contract of marriage to be made, or may dissolve a marriage contract already made: And that the church hath not power to dispense with some of these degrees [that is to say, permit incest] or may not make new laws, and constitute far more forbidden degrees, than are expressed in Leviticus, let him be an Anathema, and accursed. Before confuting the view of the Romish church, we must take notice of two things to be considered:

First, Whether or not we must stand to the forbidden degrees of consanguinity or affinity expressed in Leviticus?

¹Leviticus 18 *chapter*; 1 Cor. 5:1; Amos 2:7.

²Mark 6:18; Lev. 18:24-28.

³Lev. 20:19-21.

Secondly, Whether to these degrees set down as forbidden in Leviticus, new degrees may be added by the church of Rome, which will render a marriage incestuous?

To which we answer, *first*, That it is not in the power of any creature to dispense (that is to say, to suffer that to be used, which is forbidden by the law of God) with any of these laws in Leviticus, which forbid incestuous marriages.

And *next*, we affirm, neither is it in the power of any creature, to add to these degrees forbidden in Leviticus, any other which are not forbidden.

1.) Because such a power of dispensing is not to be found in all the Scripture, Matt. 28:20; 2 Cor. 10:8. 2.) Because the Lord says expressly, we are not to add to, or take ought from the law, Deut. 12:32. But the Lord himself has made these laws, and established these marches so sure, that no council, no pope, no creature, can either dispense with any of them, or add new ones to them, Lev. 18. 3.) Because these laws are of common, and perpetual right, and therefore cannot be dispensed with. For the breach of them is reckoned up amongst the abominations wherewith the nations about polluted and defiled the land, Lev. 18:24-28.

Question 3.—*May the man marry any of his wife's kindred, nearer in blood, than he may of his own; or, the woman, of her husband's kindred, nearer in blood, than of her own?*

Answer.—No. Lev. 20:19-21. We must either assume that every degree within which God designed to prohibit marriage is expressly mentioned in the law, or that the prohibitions mentioned are representatives of classes. The former construction is excluded by this thought; that it would have permitted cases of incest precisely as unnatural and monstrous as those so sternly forbidden. Why should it be a crime for a man to marry the widow of his deceased brother and legitimate for a woman to marry the husband of a deceased sister? Hence all sound expositors are agreed in this view. That when marriage within a given relationship is forbidden, this excludes the connection between other corresponding degrees of the same nearness. The law in some cases, as in Lev. 18:10, extends itself on this principle, and thus confirms our construction.